

## PARK OVERVIEW

### A Coastal Treasure

Point Reyes National Seashore comprises over 71,000 acres, including 33,000 acres of wilderness area. Estuaries, windswept beaches, coastal grasslands, salt marshes, and coniferous forests create a haven of 80 miles of unspoiled and undeveloped coastline. Located just an hour's drive from an urban area populated by seven million people, the park receives over 2.5 million visitors annually. Abundant recreational opportunities include 147 miles of hiking trails, four back country campgrounds, and numerous beaches.

Point Reyes is an exception to the fate that has overcome thousands of miles of U.S. coastline. Congress established this park in 1962, "to save and preserve, for the purposes of public recreation, benefit, and inspiration, a portion of the diminishing seashore of the United States that remains undeveloped."

Geologically, Point Reyes National Seashore is a land in motion. The great San Andreas Fault separates the Point Reyes Peninsula from the rest of the North American continent. Granite bedrock found here matches the bedrock in the Southern Sierra Nevada range. This indicates the peninsula has moved over 300 miles northwest over a period of 100 million years.



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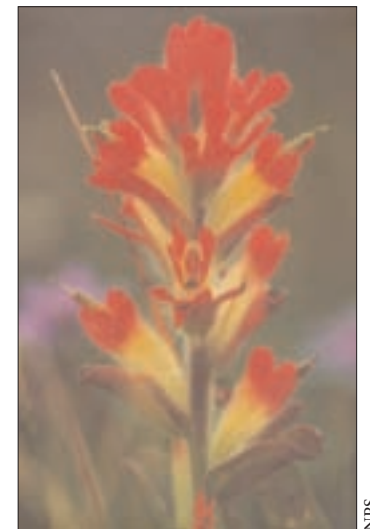
The park is an important link in a chain of protected areas, sharing boundaries with the Gulf of the Farallones and Cordell Bank National Marine Sanctuaries, Tomales Bay State Park, and Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Combined, these special places constitute one of the few remaining biologically diverse mediterranean climate regions on earth.

As wildland habitat is developed elsewhere in California, the relevance of the Point Reyes Peninsula as a protected area with a notably rich biological diversity increases. Over 45% of North American avian species and nearly 18% of California's plant species are found here due to the variety of habitat and uniqueness of the geology. In all, over 1,000 plant and animal species inhabit the park, including 27 species that are federally listed as endangered or threatened.

Population Action International has listed Central California as one of the top 25 global biologically diverse hotspots. These hotspots are "considered to be the most threatened of all biologically rich terrestrial regions of the world." In 2001, the American Bird Conservancy named Point Reyes National Seashore to its 100 Globally Important Bird Areas' list.



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Point Reyes contains examples of the world's major ecosystem types. For this reason it was internationally recognized in 1988 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Man and the Biosphere program and named the Central California Coast Biosphere Reserve. Tomales Bay, within the Seashore's boundary, has been designated a wetland of international importance (Ramsar Site).

The cultural history of Point Reyes extends back some 5,000 years to the Coast Miwok Indians who were the first human inhabitants of the peninsula. Over 100 known village sites exist within the park. According to many experts, Sir Francis Drake landed here in 1579, the first European to do so. In response to the many shipwrecks on the treacherous coastal waters, key lighthouse and lifesaving stations were established by the United States government in the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the early 1800s, Mexican land grantees established ranchos. These were followed by a wave of American agricultural operations which continue to this day in the Seashore's pastoral zone.



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## Significant Dates

1000 BC	Evidence of Coast Miwok Indians
1579	Francis Drake's California landing
1595	First known shipwreck on California's coast; <i>San Agustin</i>
1850s	Alphabet ranches established
1870	Point Reyes Lighthouse built
1889	Point Reyes Lifesaving Station built on Great Beach
1927	Point Reyes Lifesaving Station built at Chimney Rock
1935	Report recognizes Point Reyes for unsurpassed national values
1962	Legislation signed by President Kennedy establishing Point Reyes National Seashore
1976	Congress authorizes Seashore to be a site for preservation of tule elk
1976	Congress creates Point Reyes Wilderness area of 33,000 acres
1978	Tule elk reintroduced to Tomales Point
1988	Point Reyes designated as part of the Central California Coast Biosphere Reserve
1995	Vision Fire burns over 13,000 acres
2001	Establishment of Pacific Coast Learning Center
2002	Point Reyes celebrates 40th year!

